

# Push growing for wild Tasmanian deer to be hunted for restaurants and butchers

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**PHOTO:** Can wild deer be harvested to meet strong demand for venison? (ABC News)

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**The push for wild Tasmanian deer to be hunted for the commercial food and restaurant trade is gaining momentum.**

It is one of the big issues to be considered by the State Government's new peak body for the management of deer in the state — the Tasmanian Game Council.

John Kelly, who owns Lenah Game Meats, said there was a massive demand for the product.

**"Currently, we bring in about a tonne a month of venison from the mainland to sell locally," he said.**

"We're also selling about five tonnes a month of venison on the mainland that we're sourcing from South Australia."

He simply cannot meet demand.

"It was only a few weeks ago I had to knock back another order for 10 tonnes of venison a month because I just simply can't get it."

Mr Kelly is among those leading the charge to source venison from Tasmania, but said there were obstacles in the way.



**PHOTO:** John Kelly from Lenah Game Meats says he currently cannot meet the demand for venison. (ABC News)

"We tried last year to get 1,000 animals processed in Tasmania and we just couldn't find anywhere to do it," he said.

"We have enormous demand for venison yet in Tasmania thousands and thousands of deer are being shot and left in the bush to rot.

"That alone, to my mind, is a criminal waste. The fact that Tasmanians are losing out on jobs and income from it just makes it worse."

But not everyone is convinced.

Bothwell deer farmer Will Bignell has questions.

"The killing for meat raises some concerns for me as a farmer, as a deer farmer as well," he said.

**"Basically, for 25 years we were told we couldn't meet regulation standards killing on-farm as we used to.**

**These days suddenly we're being told it can be done.**

"We're curious to see how that will work.

"I think a tread-softly approach is probably pretty applicable to the system — work out what's actually going to happen and how it could work, and also the quality and food safety concerns we have around killing in the field and dressing down and trying to sell on."

The new Tasmanian Game Council was proposed by the State Government last year following an [Upper House inquiry](#) into wild fallow deer.

Primary Industries Minister Sarah Courtney said once established, the game council would give advice on the management of deer and other game animals.

She said the council would consider the possibility of hunting deer for food in Tasmania.

"That is something that obviously came out of the deer inquiry, and it's something the council will be tasked to do — to look at the feasibility of whether or not that can actually be progressed," she said.

## Swift action needed 'to stop deer in their tracks': Bob Brown

Environmentalist Bob Brown said the increasing number of wild deer was having a devastating impact on the World Heritage Area and farmland.

He said the whole process was moving too slowly and called for a cull.

"This advisory council is part of a process of doing nothing," he said.

"This State Government now has been aware for years of the rapid spread of wild deer through rural Tasmania, as well as into national parks and the World Heritage Area and has done nothing.

"What's required here is action from the Minister for National Parks — that's Will Hodgman — to stop the deer in their tracks."